BROADBAND IMPERATIVES FOR AFRICAN AMERICANS:

POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS TO INCREASE DIGITAL ADOPTION FOR MINORITIES AND THEIR COMMUNITIES

A REPORT FROM

NATIONAL BLACK CAUCUS OF STATE LEGISLATORS
NATIONAL ORGANIZATION OF BLACK ELECTED LEGISLATIVE WOMEN
NATIONAL CONFERENCE OF BLACK MAYORS
NATIONAL BLACK CAUCUS OF LOCAL ELECTED OFFICIALS
NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF BLACK COUNTY OFFICIALS

IN PARTNERSHIP WITH

THE JOINT CENTER FOR POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC STUDIES

BROADBAND IMPERATIVES FOR AFRICAN AMERICANS

POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS TO INCREASE DIGITAL ADOPTION FOR MINORITIES AND THEIR COMMUNITIES

Broadband Imperatives for African Americans: Policy Recommendations to Increase Digital Adoption for Minorities and their Communities is a project of The Joint Center Media and Technology Institute and the following national organizations that represent African American elected officials:

- National Black Caucus of State Legislators (NBCSL)
- National Organization of Black Elected Legislative (NOBEL) Women
- National Conference of Black Mayors (NCBM)
- National Black Caucus of Local Elected Officials (NBC-LEO)
- National Association of Black County Officials (NABCO)

The Joint Center for Political and Economic Studies was founded in 1970 in the wake of the Voting Rights Act. With lead support from the Ford Foundation, the nonpartisan, nonprofit Joint Center seeks to augment the voice and resources of emerging black leaders and elected officials. The Joint Center is the only freestanding think tank focusing primarily on the concerns of African Americans and communities of color. Currently, Joint Center Initiatives include:

- The Media and Technology Institute
- The Health Policy Institute
- The Commission to Engage African Americans on Climate Change

A fourth venture – the Civic Engagement and Governance Institute will soon be launched to energize political participation and increase public policy awareness among black elected officials.

Founded last year, the Media and Technology Institute focuses on how the media industry and emerging communications technologies such as broadband and social media can become avenues of advancement for people of color. The Institute produces and distributes research reports and policy papers to inform dialogue within this area and aligns its work with other Joint Center interests to influence policy and advocacy efforts. The Institute engages in a series of outreach activities, such as press and legislative briefings, conferences and stakeholder trainings that promote its groundbreaking publications.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In early 2009, a broad cross-section of organizations that represent African American elected officials convened and have produced a shared vision for broadband access and adoption for minorities and their communities. Through national and local conferences, along with structured policy forums, these organizations have brainstormed the barriers to participation for minorities and laid out a series of recommendations that serve to encourage more people to use broadband-enabled applications, enhance quality of life and promote sustainable community development. The following organizations—together representing essentially all local and state Black elected officials in the nation - have endorsed this Report:

- National Black Caucus of State Legislators (NBCSL)
- National Organization of Black Elected Legislative (NOBEL) Women
- National Conference of Black Mayors (NCBM)
- National Black Caucus of Local Elected Officials (NBC-LEO)
- National Association of Black County Officials (NABCO)

Between these five national organizations, more than 3,000 elected officials are represented that serve the broad interests of millions of voters, while ensuring equal access to resources for minorities and lower income residents of their districts. Moreover, these groups represent a cross section of the many layers of government and a diverse perspective as federal, state, county and city leaders. This report outlines key policies to ensure affordable and fair access for minority constituents, especially those who are poor and live in communities with limited or non-existent broadband services. Coined as *broadband imperatives,* we seek to advise government, industry and other stakeholders on strategies that support African Americans as they embrace digital technologies, and best practices that can serve as models for increasing engagement and adoption of broadband. As the country crafts a National Broadband Plan and allocates resources through the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) to expand broadband services and programs in unserved and underserved communities, the elected officials from the referenced associations are interested in sharing the experiences of their local constituents, offering policy recommendations that appeal to their constituencies and peers and supporting the implementation of projects that serve to get more Americans online, especially citizens of color.

Section I of this paper discusses disparities currently existing among different race and ethnic groups and the barriers African Americans are facing on broadband adoption. A set of policy recommendations to increase broadband adoption among minorities are illustrated in Section II with three case studies. Section II also recommends ways broadband could be used to improve healthcare, education and employment. The last section details the call for action from African American elected officials committed to helping government and industry overcome these barriers and increase sustainable broadband adoption for African Americans.

KEY POLICY IMPLICATIONS

One of the most significant problems facing the future of America's digital economy is that minority communities, especially African Americans, are not adequately adopting and using broadband technology. Likewise people of color are not aggressively using digital applications to enhance their academic performance, economic well being or their ability to obtain state of the art healthcare services provided by broadband-enabled applications.

The continued inability on the part of African Americans to fully integrate advanced communication technologies into their everyday lives is not an option. Thus, African American elected officials propose policy recommendations to increase broadband adoption and use, especially among communities of color. In this paper, this joint caucus of black elected officials recommends a three-tiered approach to increasing broadband adoption for African Americans:

1. New opportunities must be created to bring broadband directly to consumers, especially at public anchor institutions, community based organizations and within the home, for increased productivity and mobility.
2. Broadband access must be coupled with relevant online content and digital literacy training that nurtures a culture of use among African Americans, and helps people better understand and value broadband as an essential service that can improve their lives.
3. Sustainable broadband adoption efforts must be aligned with key areas such as education, healthcare and employment that improve quality of life for African American consumers.

For each imperative, policy recommendations that serve to start or expand upon existing models are shared, and where possible, proposals for public-private partnerships are encouraged. Overall, the policies that are included in this report are meant to inform the current dialogue around broadband adoption and use, and demonstrate the willingness of black elected officials to get involved as key decision makers, advisors and implementers within their districts.

Because we serve millions of voters, we know from experience, and provide evidence in this report, that minorities can benefit greatly from broadband adoption and that their membership in the online community can substantively improve the economic and social health of the nation at large. We pledge our utmost effort to work across our constituencies in a coordinated way to expand citizen awareness and engagement on broadband deployment and adoption in our respective communities. Moreover, we pledge our commitment to public-private sector partnerships that support programs and policies that advance the engagement of racial and cultural minorities.

INTRODUCTION

America's continued economic leadership is firmly linked with ubiquitous broadband. Information and communications technologies are now integrated into nearly every aspect of life and learning, and it is no longer possible to contemplate the economic and social advancement of communities that cannot access the opportunities available only in the digital world. Other industrialized nations recognize this and have set ambitious goals aimed at bringing state-of-the-art broadband access to every citizen. To compete, lead and prosper for the remainder of this century, America too must bring all of its citizens into the world of broadband.

Citizens who are shut out of the online world are less able to become educated, gain critical job skills, manage their own health and that of their family members, and engage in even the most basic commercial activities and transactions. Without access to broadband, marginalized groups are ill equipped to contribute to the nation's economy, and they increasingly face lives of diminished opportunity. With people of color projected to become the majority of the U.S. population before mid-century, the rates at which poorer minority communities gain access to broadband have implications that go well beyond matters of simple fairness and equity and into the realm of strategic national importance.

As elected officials who are concerned about the development and growth of the communities we represent—and with sustaining America's global leadership for the long term—we call for an urgent national focus on delivering broadband access to every community. To achieve this, we need concurrent measures to increase adoption and usage of broadband-enabled applications in communities of color. Thus we are offering a series of policy recommendations to accelerate access to minority consumers within their homes and communities, and to support relevant online content focusing on health, employment, education and other areas where broadband can dramatically improve the quality of life for people of color.

Broadband offers the hope that we can, with support from government and industry, make enormous strides toward bringing opportunity, progress and prosperity that has been so elusive to so many of our communities for so long. By adopting 21st Century practices, uniquely tailored to help us meet the rigorous demands of our increasingly digital society, we will be able to close the achievement gap and deliver prosperity among communities of color and to the entire country.

TRENDS IN BROADBAND ADOPTION FOR AFRICAN AMERICANS

According to recent census data, our country is browning and aging at a rapid and unprecedented rate.[1] The U.S. Census Bureau projects that minorities, who currently represent about one-third of the U.S. population, will become the national majority by 2042, with people of color projected to be 54 percent of the nation's population by 2050.[2,3] As demographic tides shift, so too will the working-age population, with people of color making up more than 50 percent of that population by 2039 and 55 percent by 2050.[4]

As people of color become a critical mass in the American workforce, persistent gaps in broadband adoption between minority populations and other groups must be addressed to ensure equal opportunity to emerging opportunities. The 2009 Pew Home Broadband Adoption study noted that, while home-based broadband adoption is growing among African Americans, the rate of growth has been slower when compared to other segments of the population. Table 1 provides a comparison of Internet adoption among racial and ethnic minorities since 2006. As shown below, African Americans lag behind whites and English speaking Hispanics in the latest Pew research.

1 *See* U.S. Census Bureau Report, *An Older and More Diverse Nation by Midcentury* (August 2008) available at http://www.census.gov/Press-Release/www/releases/archives/population/012496.html (last visited May 5, 2009.)

2 U.S. Census Bureau estimates also predict that by 2050, the minority population will include 235.7 million people out of a total U.S. population of 439 million. Of that number, the African American population is projected to increase from 41.1 million to 65.7 million between 2008 and 2050, an increase from 14 to 15 percent of the American population. In contrast, the non-Hispanic single-race White population is projected to decrease to 46 percent of the U.S. population by 2050, down from 66 percent in 2008.

3 *See* id.

4 In 2050, the U.S. workforce is projected to be more than 15 percent African American (up from 13 percent in 2008), 30 percent Hispanic (up from 15 percent in 2008), and 9.6 percent Asian American (up from 5.3 percent in 2008).

TABLE 1: TRENDS IN HOME BASED ADOPTION BY RACE AND ETHNICITY

Percentage of adults in each group with broadband at home, 2006-2009

White (not Hispanic)	42%	48%	57%	65%
Black (not Hispanic)	31%	40%	43%	46%
Hispanic (English speaking)	41%	47%	56%	68%

Source: Pew Internet & American Life Project, April 2009

The slower growth of African American broadband use is illustrated by Pew's data that offers demographic trends in Internet use. From 2008 to 2009, African Americans experienced an increase of only three percentage points for home-based broadband adoption, much lower than the increases for whites and Hispanics. Table 2 shows this comparison.

TABLE 2: YEAR-TO-YEAR CHANGES IN HOME-BASED ADOPTION, 2008-2009

White (not Hispanic)	8	14%
Black (not Hispanic)	3	7%
Hispanic (English speaking)	12	21%

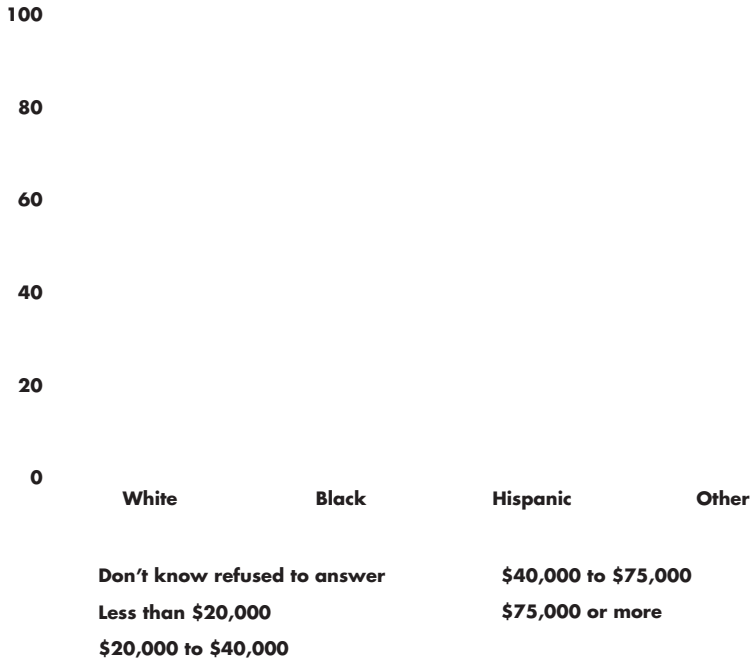
Source: Pew Internet & American Life Project, April 2009

BARRIERS TO AFRICAN AMERICAN BROADBAND ADOPTION AND USE

When illustrating the reasons why certain groups choose not to adopt home-based broadband, the Pew Internet & American Life Project ranks relevance as the primary factor. In 2009, fifty percent of all dial up and non-Internet users reported that they are simply not interested, too busy or that nothing could get them to switch to broadband services. Price, availability and usability, in that order, were other reasons given for non-adoption. African Americans, however, cited availability, price, relevance and usability, in that order, as their major reasons for not getting online. While price points for broadband services continue to decline, a large number of African Americans, especially those that are low-income, still face financial hardships that make it difficult for them to get online.

Family income, when coupled with race and ethnicity, continues to be a major barrier to broadband adoption when comparing African Americans with similar income groups. As Figure 1 shows, among people who did not have Internet access, almost half (49%) of African Americans had a family income of less than $20,000, compared to 33% of whites and 19% of Hispanics within this income bracket.

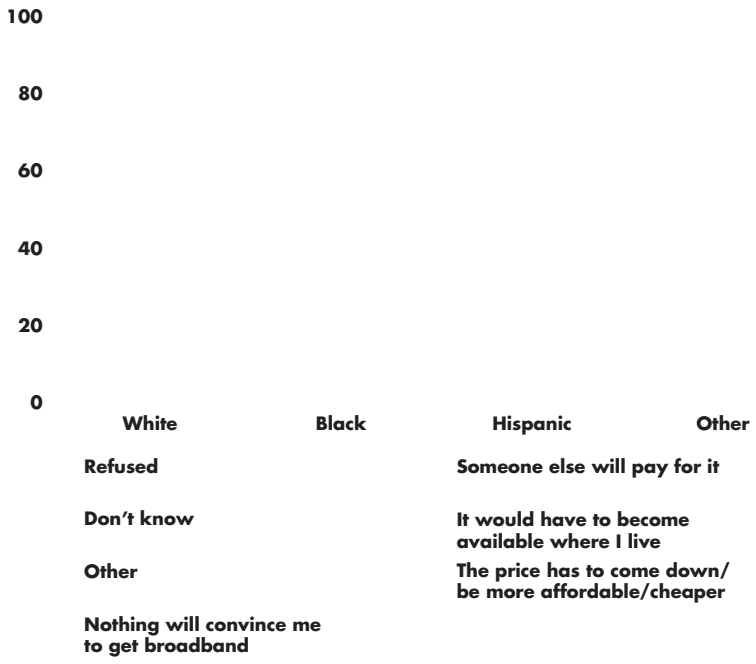
FIGURE 1: NON-INTERNET USERS BY FAMILY INCOME, RACE AND ETHNICITY, 2009



Source: Joint Center's analysis of data from the Pew Internet & American Life Project, 2009

When asked why they did not have broadband at home, two thirds of African American non-Internet users were also concerned about the cost: 53% said they would use broadband if the price came down and another 14% said they would if someone paid for it. Figure 2 offers a comparison of this data by race and interest.

FIGURE 2: REASONS NON-INTERNET USERS CITE FOR NOT HAVING BROADBAND AT HOME, 2009



Source: Joint Center's analysis of data from the Pew Internet & American Life Project, 2009

Given the fact that the rate of African American unemployment continues to increase, affordability presents a tremendous barrier to African American broadband adoption. Moreover, a subscription to broadband services requires access to a computer—still the mainstream device to access broadband in the home.

African Americans, however, are less likely to own a computer. A 2005 report published by the Children's Partnership indicated that children from families with annual incomes over $75,000 were twice as likely to have access to a computer at home than those from very low-income families; 96 percent to 45 percent. Further, a recent Pew survey (July 2009) found that half of African Americans owned desktop computers compared to two thirds of whites. Another interesting finding from the Pew research indicated that although African Americans were less likely to use desktop computers to access broadband, they were more likely to access the Internet through wireless devices (see Table 3).

TABLE 3: HARDWARE FOR ACCESSING THE INTERNET BY RACE AND ETHNICITY

Cell Phone	84%	83%	89%
Desktop Computer	66%	51%	64%
Laptop Computer	47%	34%	56%
Game Console	37%	46%	57%
iPod or mp3 Player	42%	44%	61%
PDA	12%	12%	24%
Electronic Book (Kindle, Sony)	1%	7%	2%
% with at least one item	92%	89%	94%
% with at least two items	79%	69%	83%
% with at least three items	57%	53%	73%
% with at least four items	38%	34%	57%
% with at least five items	18%	22%	34%

Source: Pew Internet & American Life Project, July 2009

Certainly, the increasing use of cell phones by African Americans offers promise for narrowing the digital divide. Going forward, more research can better understand the depth and breadth of available mobile applications, especially those that improve quality of life indicators, and explore whether flexible pricing and ownership models have the potential to facilitate greater adoption and use of mobile devices by minorities.

Disparities in broadband adoption threaten to leave a growing proportion of our society adrift and unable to participate in an increasingly information-driven economy. Focused and strategic "digital inclusion" initiatives may well be the best and most cost-

effective ways of expanding opportunity and generating social progress in communities where previous economic development efforts historically have had limited success.[5] This is the view of the University of Minnesota's Institute on Race and Poverty, which asserts that "access to computers, broadband services, web-based applications and the Internet in general are all ultimately about access to opportunity. Life opportunities including living wage employment, housing that is affordable to local residents, social and health services conveniently located and priced, good quality public educational systems, and more."[6]

PROMOTING BROADBAND ADOPTION AND USE AMONG MINORITIES

With the passage of the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act ("ARRA"), which includes $7.2 billion for the deployment of broadband infrastructure,[7] Congress and President Barack Obama signaled a new determination to support efforts at advancing broadband access and use. The U. S. Department of Commerce's Broadband Technology Opportunities Program (BTOP) has been designed to support broadband deployment, sustainable broadband adoption and public computer centers, though the "minimum" amounts designated for the latter two purposes are disproportionately small. All of these components contribute to the broader competitiveness of the United States when it comes to technology access. On top of this, the Federal Communications Commission is currently preparing and seeking input on a plan to develop a comprehensive blueprint for the National Broadband Plan to improve broadband consumer and institutional access and adoption. It is our view that both of these efforts should be guided by an understanding that access to broadband is essential to economic and social progress in every community, and that broadband itself can be an essential tool for bringing jobs, economic development and a better quality of life in economically challenged communities across the country.[8]

BROADBAND IMPERATIVES TO INCREASE DIGITAL ADOPTION FOR AFRICAN AMERICANS AND THEIR COMMUNITIES

We recommend a three-tiered approach to increasing broadband adoption for African Americans:

1. Broadband must be brought directly to consumers, especially at public anchor institutions, community based organizations and within the home, for increased productivity and mobility.
2. Broadband access must be coupled with relevant online content and digital literacy training that nurtures a culture of use among African Americans, and helps people value broadband as an essential service that can improve their lives.
3. Sustainable broadband adoption efforts must be aligned with key areas such as education, healthcare and employment that improve quality of life for African American consumers.

5 On June 5, 2009, the National Black Caucus of State Legislators ("NBCSL"), National Organization of Black Elected Legislative Women ("NOBEL"), National Conference of Black Mayors ("NCBM"), National Black Caucus of Local Elected Officials ("NBC-LEO"), and National Association of Black County Officials ("NABCO") submitted a letter to the FCC regarding the development of a National Broadband Plan. They commented that "the fate of our nation is on the line, and broadband technology can, and must, be used to help improve our population, particularly members of minority, low-income, unserved and underserved communities." Carter, Margaret, Haithcox, Linda, Hudson, Heather, Lynum, Daisy, Smyre, Calvin. Letter to the Federal Communications Commission. June 5, 2009. African-American Elected Officials Policy Group Foundational Principles regarding the development of a National Broadband Plan as required by the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009, GN Docket No. 09-51.

6 Orfiled Miron, Luce, Thomas "Digital Justice: Progress towards Digital Inclusion in Minnesota." Institute on Race and Poverty: Research, Education and Advocacy. Dec. 2006. http://www.irpumn.org/uls/resources/projects/DigitalJustice.pdf.

7 In addition to the infusion of capital, the federal government is providing to deploy broadband infrastructure, large communications companies spend, on average, more than $60 billion a year to provide broadband infrastructure to the country.

8 On August 14, 2009, the National Lieutenant Governors Association ("NLGA"), National Black Caucus of State Legislators, National Hispanic Caucus of State Legislators ("NHCSL"), American Legislative Exchange Council ("ALEC"), National Association of Counties ("NACo"), National Conference of Hispanic Legislators ("NCHL"), Women in Municipal Government ("WIMG"), National Black Caucus of Local Elected Officials, and National Association of Black County Officials, representing the interests of state and local governments, expressed their members' view that Congress and the FCC should adopt a national broadband policy that focuses on promoting adoption and use of broadband technologies by all Americans regardless of race, income, or age.

As elected officials, we envision a broad collaborative effort that involves all levels of government – federal, state and local – and all sectors of the telecommunications industry in an effort to leverage available resources and scale successful programs to increase broadband adoption among minority populations. Public-private partnerships are supported throughout these policy recommendations and various national programs and initiatives that have shown promise in some parts of the country are also cited in this report.

BROADBAND MUST BE BROUGHT DIRECTLY TO CONSUMERS, ESPECIALLY AT PUBLIC ANCHOR INSTITUTIONS, COMMUNITY BASED ORGANIZATIONS AND WITHIN THE HOME, FOR INCREASED PRODUCTIVITY AND MOBILITY.

The creation of an inclusive digital ecosystem is our highest priority recommendation to increase broadband adoption and use among African Americans and other people of color.

Broadband must be made available at public institutions (e.g., schools, libraries, park districts and hospitals) and in the home if it is going to be the driver that reinvigorates equal opportunity. Strategies to accelerate broadband adoption among African Americans must appeal directly to the needs of consumers, ensuring that they have choices for broadband services, competitive pricing and payment plans, and convenient applications that inspire broadband use and retention.

BROADBAND IN THE COMMUNITY

The Montclair State University (MSU) Campus Connect Program is an innovative model that exemplifies why relevance is critical to attract and retain people online. The program is supported through a wireless technology platform where students, teachers and administrators maintain connections to enhance the overall educational experience. In this virtual environment, each student uses his or her access to receive class updates, connect with classmates and professors and even communicate with security while traveling across campus. Students are always connected to teachers and administrators and the use of technology is integrated within the core curricula. Thus, students have the ability to engage professors and their peers irrespective of place and time, thereby increasing students' ability to succeed in MSU's challenging academic environment.

For minorities to effectively engage new technology, it must be accessible, convenient and relevant to users. In the spirit of MSU's Campus Connect program, new technology should enable and support relationships, particularly those with key influencers in their lives—employers, teachers, health care providers, social service workers and family members. The MSU Campus Connect program model suggests that broadband should be distributed with a purpose. In this case, the focus is on improving the university's educational experience for the various stakeholders. Among those that have been slow to adopt broadband and/or exhibit marginal use, we must consider the correct pathways for engagement, e.g., healthcare, employment, education and leverage the network to eliminate obstacles for African Americans.

More importantly, the technology platform must be easily integrated into the existing environment of users, thus complementing the context in which communities of color function. The high penetration of mobile devices among minorities might be partly attributed to lack of space for stationary desktops or transitional living conditions, the need to feel instantly connected to social networks or the ability to customize and control content. Strategies that focus on meeting people "where they are" will be most effective in getting these targeted populations online. While more research can inform the extent to which cell phones and other mobile devices can match the computing potential of personal computers, the MSU Campus Connect case study demonstrates that ease of use and user convenience are key factors in getting people to benefit from robust networks. For African Americans, the ability to have a seamless experience, with less focus on the device used to connect, might increase broadband adoption and use.

Additional significance of the MSU Campus Connect program is its ability to be sustainable. The program is part of the university's core curricula, so that learning modules and extracurricular activities are interdependent with the program. The MSU program is sustained through general tuition fees – underscoring the importance of reliable funding to establish infrastructure and training for social service programs serving disadvantaged populations.

When dealing with low-income, minority populations for example, social service programs could move to primarily engage clients through broadband and be provided with funding—whether government or philanthropic—to support technical infrastructure and staff training. To date, government support for nonprofits has primarily provided hardware, and organizational access to web-based interfaces that facilitate program reporting and fiscal accountability. Reordering government investments to focus on how agencies connect to people is integral to increasing adoption among African Americans, especially those that are dependent upon public benefits and government supported programs. Public-private partnerships can also find ways to make broadband more affordable for low-income users through the creation of subsidies targeted to the poor. Competitive pricing and payment plans can also be explored by industry to increase adoption among new or marginal users that can ultimately lead to more sustainable uptake.

As with the MSU program, broadband users should be able to experience broadband and all of its benefits within familiar and comfortable settings to drive a local culture of use. Therefore, broadband should be integrated into community institutions such as churches, day care centers, parks, and commercial establishments such as barber and beauty salons where local residents congregate on a regular basis. Moreover, our ability to ensure that broadband is readily available in all of our public anchor institutions, with some level of consistency between these access points is equally important. Parents of school-age children, for example, should be able to tap into robust educational content anywhere within their community- whether a community center, library or place of worship.

The Broadband Technology Opportunity Program, funded through the ARRA, as well as the forthcoming FCC National Broadband Plan, can be major catalysts to increase the number of minority users that feel comfort, convenience and control when accessing the Internet.

POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS:

- Existing BTOP funding, and any future appropriations, should be much more heavily weighted toward supporting sustainable broadband adoption, particularly those programs that are localized to meet the unique needs of African American consumers.
- National broadband policy should include a restructuring of the Universal Service Fund ("USF") to provide financial support to households that are unable to afford broadband services.[9]
    - A possible opportunity is to allocate funds toward a Broadband Connect program that could be offered to low-income consumers that require a government subsidy to get online. Funds for this new program could also go towards vouchers to subsidize low-cost or refurbished hardware.

9 The Universal Service Fund was established by the Federal Communications Commission in 1996 to ensure that advanced communications services are available to consumers and are affordable and capable of adoption and use. Telecommunications providers contribute to this fund via an assessment on their interstate and international revenues; these assessments go to one of four potential pools of funding -- high-cost, low-income, schools and libraries and rural health care – to offset the consumer costs associated with obtaining and maintaining access and use of advanced communication technologies. Federal Communications Commission, "Universal Service," http://www.fcc.gov/wcb/tapd/universal_service/; Universal Service Administrative Company, "Universal Service Fund," http://www.universalservice.org/about/universal-service/.

- Libraries, schools and other anchor institutions within low-income minority communities should have special exceptions under the Schools and Libraries Program of the Universal Service Fund, commonly known as the "E-Rate," to offer free broadband services to surrounding communities, especially to subsidized housing and agencies that serve disadvantaged youth and adult residents.[10]
- Minority consumers should leverage their buying power in order to encourage the industry to develop more competitive pricing plans, stored value cards and other user-friendly payment plans that promote low-income and minority adoption by addressing barriers to consumer participation (e.g., limited spending power and credit checks).
- Municipal social service agencies and nonprofit organizations should receive economic stimulus funding to adapt to new technologies—especially broadband and social media—to improve their connections to populations in need of social services, educational resources and family support.
- Minimum community broadband requirements (e.g., speed, latency, etc.) must be established in the National Broadband Plan to ensure that minority and low-income consumers can take advantage of current and next generation networks to reap the continuing benefits of digital access.
- City, county and state governments should be provided with stimulus funds for digital awareness and broadband literacy campaigns that increase minority engagement with broadband.

BROADBAND TO THE HOME

Just as electricity and running water have become commonplace fixtures in our society, broadband to the home must be deemed essential. Government should help ensure its availability to all Americans regardless of geographic location and economic situation.

By providing expanded learning opportunities, as well as new avenues of access for employment, commerce and health care, broadband introduces opportunities for economic and social advancement into communities. Broadband in the home can help minimize the socio-economic disparities that persist among low income, minority or socially disadvantaged populations, which tend to be disparately impacted by a lack of access to quality information or essential services.

Efforts to bring broadband to individuals within government assisted housing are already underway. Edgewood Terrace, a mixed-income housing complex located in northeast Washington, D.C. installed a new broadband infrastructure as a means of promoting economic vitality and reversing urban blight. Through a joint effort by the Community Preservation and Development Corporation (CPDC), the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), and the Department of Commerce's former Technology Opportunities Program (TOP), a comprehensive strategy was developed to promote economic opportunity, educational advancement, and a stronger, more vibrant community by deploying broadband to each individual residence. Today, every one of the 792 Edgewood Terrace residences is wired for broadband and more than 2,400 users are now registered on the community network. Since broadband has been rolled out to Edgewood Terrace, violent crime and gang activity have decreased and parents have seen a decided improvement in the academic performance of their children.

One Economy Corporation, a global non-profit committed to accelerating broadband access for the poor, provides another case study for getting access into the home. For the last five years, One Economy has changed housing policy in several states to bring broadband connections to over 350,000 units of affordable housing across the nation. By leveraging the low-income housing tax credit and redirecting funds toward broadband deployment, thousands of families are now benefitting from free or low cost broadband

10 The E-Rate was enacted as part of the Telecommunications Act of 1996. It is administered by the Universal Service Administrative Company (USAC) under the direction of the Federal Communications Commission (FCC), and provides discounts to assist most schools and libraries in the United States to obtain affordable telecommunications and Internet access. It has helped transform America's schools and libraries into modern institutions. See the impact of the program on communities in the joint report of the Education and Library Network Coalition (EdLiNc) and National Coalition for Technology in Education and Training (NCTET) at http://www.edlinc.org/pdf/NCTETReport_212.pdf (last visited on September 21, 2009).

service. Drawing from One Economy's model, housing mandates with earmarked funding could ensure than an in-home broadband connection is no longer just a perk for those with means, but a utility for every American household.

POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS:

- Federal and local legislators can ensure that all for-profit and non-profit developers that receive government housing subsidies install and maintain free or low cost broadband services for disadvantaged residents.
- Developers and property managers that receive government support should also install a personal computer in every unit as a "home appliance" to reduce disparities in computer ownership.
- Government agencies receiving federal funds that contemplate the use of broadband to supplement or effect program completion should be required to coordinate with each other regarding the implementation of any such broadband-enabled capital infrastructure project or service delivery programs, e.g., the development of a smartgrid or nationalized telemedicne programs. Moreover, once the opportunities for interagency cooperation are identified, e.g. , healthcare, education, employment and training, additional points for stimulus funds should be allocated to reward grantees interested in the cross pollination of broadband access.

BROADBAND ACCESS MUST BE COUPLED WITH RELEVANT ONLINE CONTENT AND DIGITAL LITERACY TRAINING THAT NURTURES A CULTURE OF USE AMONG AFRICAN AMERICANS, AND HELPS PEOPLE VALUE BROADBAND AS AN ESSENTIAL SERVICE THAT CAN IMPROVE THEIR LIVES.

While deployment of broadband into unserved and underserved communities is vitally important, we must undertake efforts to ensure that, once people get broadband, they are able to use and benefit from it. To that end, we should rely on community colleges, libraries and Historically Black Colleges and Universities ("HBCUs"),[11] community technology centers and other community centers to ensure that members of our communities who are unable to adopt broadband individually or at home can receive access to broadband technology.[12]

We should likewise rely increasingly on the broadband opportunities being created by our civil rights organizations[13] through their national public computing and digital learning centers. In addition to their ability to provide broadband access points, these

11 Like the effort currently being pursued by the Benedict College Department of Community Development, HBCUs can be used as access points and training grounds to promote the increased use of advanced communication technologies. Benedict College's Division of Community Develop has developed a Broadband in Cities and Towns initiative that is keenly focused on exploring the impact of broadband on education and economic development, particularly for African Americans of extremely limited economic means. Each year, Benedict College hosts a broadband forum that brings national thought leaders together to explore the import and impact of broadband on communities of color. Benedict College, "Division of Community Development," http://www.benedict.edu/divisions/comdev/bc_community_dev.html; Benedict College, "Broadband in Cities and Towns," http://www.benedict.edu/divisions/comdev/bc_community_dev.html .

12 On April 13, 2009, the National Conference of Black Mayors, National Black Caucus of State Legislators, National Organization of Black Elected Legislative Women, National Black Caucus of Local Elected Officials, and National Organization of Black County Officials wrote to the Office of Telecommunications and Information Applications ("OTIA") and the Broadband Technologies Opportunity Program of the U.S. Department of Commerce, recommending that NTIA and RUS award funding to HBCUs that assist in correcting broadband service disparities. Carter, Margaret, Haithcox, Linda, Hudson, Heather, Lynum, Daisy, Smyre, Calvin. Letter to Bernadette McGuire-Rivera and David P. Grahn. April 13, 2009. African-American Policy Group Foundational Principles regarding the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009, Broadband Initiatives, Docket No. 090309298-9299-01.

13 The National Urban League, the National Council of La Raza, the Asian American Justice Center, the League of United Latin American Citizens and One Economy Corp. have united to create the Broadband Opportunity Coalition ("BBOC") to advance minority broadband adoption, literacy and minority entrepreneurship. BBOC and One Economy have applied for funding through BTOP to expand the more than 300 public computing centers used by the BBOC member organizations nationwide as a means of enhancing educational outreach and economic opportunity for communities of color. These centers would provide opportunities for wide-scale broadband and computer access to people who cannot afford to take advantage of broadband opportunities at all. They would likewise serve as a training ground for the creation and development of new digital life-management skills within communities of color.

community centers play an essential role in providing digital literacy training so that the people attending the centers can make maximum use of the technology and tools available to them.[14]

As America looks to community service to build better communities and enrich the experiences of citizens, digital literacy training—whether facilitated by adults, youth or seniors – can be a new force in the service learning environment. Community service programs such as AmeriCorps, VISTA, Teach for America, and City Year could take on the task of raising the technical proficiency of marginalized communities. These program volunteers could be internal or external to the community, as long as they undertake to raise the understanding and skill sets of individuals left behind in the digital age. As part of this initiative, a core curriculum around digital citizenship could effectively prepare young people on Internet safety and expose them to the multitude of Internet resources.

Meaningful, online content accelerates broadband adoption when it is designed to inspire and motivate people to take action to improve their lives. While many would suggest that traffic to the Internet is driven primarily by entertainment and social networking sites that include Facebook, Gather and My Space, the challenge of steering first time or late adopters to more public purpose content provides a new opportunity to address relevance issues.

Government can play a leading role in this by speeding up the process of moving public services online, taking measures to help citizens understand and access them and linking citizens to social networks to encourage the development of online communities that can help bricks-and-mortar communities address issues of concern. Meanwhile, we should facilitate an environment in which social media and Internet-based applications can be used to encourage private efforts to produce content that enables people to see and feel the value of broadband for themselves in envisioning how their lives can be improved with broadband.

The Obama Administration and the new FCC led by Chairman Julius Genachowski have already begun to demonstrate the importance and power of online access to government services through the various websites they have deployed in recent months. Governments on the state and local level now have an opportunity to follow the trends started by federal government in moving their services online, and making them exciting, interesting applications that are not only informative but engaging while serving a great social utility.

One Economy Corporation's focus and attention on the creation of public purpose media has been defining and shaping the way low income people consume online content. Early this year, One Economy released Diary of a Single Mom. Produced by the V-Studio,[15] Diary of a Single Mom is a web-series about three culturally diverse women raising children on their own who have to navigate a variety of life issues such as managing childcare, healthcare, education and finances on their own. Each time a person visits Diary of a Single Mom to view an episode, she also has an opportunity to interact with the Toolbox, powered by the Beehive,[16] a web portal that provides useful self-help information and resources. In its pairing with Diary of a Single Mom, the Toolbox topics include mortgage and rent calculations, home decoration tips, after-school programs and information about child support and estate planning. Beyond this particular application, the Beehive provides tax management skills, academic tutorial and motivational programs, and other self-help/self-improvement modules.

14 Connected Nation's No Child Left Offline and Computers for Kids programs both provide innovative approaches to providing children with access to computers and broadband so that they can perform basic computing functions and reap the benefits of access to a broadband-enabled world. Similarly, One Economy's Digital Connectors program trains young people who, for no fewer than 15 hours of community service a week, go out into their communities and work with the elderly and other disadvantaged populations to impart the digital literacy skills and training they will need to effectively navigate online environments. In exchange for their service, Digital Connectors are afforded their own computers.

15 Founded by One Economy and actor, producer, and director Robert Townsend, the "V Studio" serves as a hub for "the creation and development of informing, engaging media that has the defined purpose of assisting the American public in relevant matters of health, welfare, and safety."

16 The Beehive (www.thebeehive.org) is an award-winning, multilingual Web portal that provides low-income individuals web-based tools and information about financial services, education, jobs, health care, and family. The site features topics that can help people raise their standard of living by accessing information and learning how to take action on issues that are important to them and can change their lives.

Diary of a Single Mom is a stellar example of how video can be used to educate, inspire and motivate people toward action. Through the content created by Diary of a Single Mom, and the information made available by the Beehive, users of the One Economy portals are simultaneously educated and entertained. Moreover, once they are drawn online by this compelling coupling of content and informational resources, they have a new incentive to find additional services and programs online to help them better navigate life decisions.

As the Internet becomes perceived as a life-resource, African Americans and other people of color will be more likely to seek opportunities online that they can integrate into their lives. The resulting increased exposure to relevant content will motivate African Americans to adopt and use broadband, the vehicle by which that relevant content is being delivered.

Obviously, consumers need to know that the Internet can help solve every day problems, while understanding how to avoid predatory and privacy infractions. Thus, educational efforts to help African Americans address possible breaches of their privacy must be supported. Private industry, along with nonprofit groups that support safe web environments, can be helpful in creating and implementing this type of campaign.

In defining the breadth of broadband adoption opportunities available to us, the FCC, along with other federal agencies and branches of government and the communications and software industries, should also focus on promoting broadband-enabled applications related to healthcare, education, energy, transportation, workforce development and the provision of government services that will help the American people, particularly communities of color, better understand the ways in which broadband can facilitate new opportunities in our new economy.

To effectively and expeditiously inform and educate the American public—on a wider scale—about the transformative power of broadband, our nation's leading and most innovative companies should band together and apportion a percentage of their marketing and advertising dollars and/or airtime specifically to broadband outreach, much as they did during the transition to digital broadcast television. Representatives from each sector of the industry should work together to develop consistent messaging campaigns that demonstrate the power of broadband, and its associated applications and devices, to dramatically change lives and improve livelihoods. As mentioned, additional topics around Internet safety and privacy should also be integrated into these campaigns to reduce the number of preventable mishaps among new adopters.

POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS:

- The Obama Administration should review and repurpose national community service initiatives and funding to include communications and information technology as one of the core elements of these programs.
- Colleges and universities, especially HBCUs, should be provided with additional support to serve as community hubs for technology training. Special incentives, such as grants to provide new computers or technology necessary for higher learning in the 21st century, or tuition offsets for students pursuing technology-related or computer science careers, should be given to students who pursue their educational goals at a local community college or HBCU.
- National campaigns aimed at raising digital literacy that also address privacy and safety concerns should be launched through public-private sector partnerships.
- To further demonstrate its support of the broadband revolution, the federal government should provide additional resources to enable state and local governments, particularly those representing unserved and underserved communities, with additional funding to increase their online presence and to enhance the user-friendliness of the broadband-enabled applications used online.

SUSTAINABLE BROADBAND ADOPTION EFFORTS MUST BE ALIGNED WITH KEY AREAS SUCH AS EDUCATION, HEALTHCARE AND EMPLOYMENT THAT IMPROVE QUALITY OF LIFE FOR AFRICAN AMERICAN CONSUMERS.

As we ensure that people of color are adequately prepared to meet the challenges associated with our new economy, we must use every resource possible to ensure that government and industry work together to facilitate increased broadband adoption for the benefit of us all.

The ARRA provides opportunities to promote sustainable broadband adoption through its encouragement of a variety of broadband-enabled applications. Specifically, funding opportunities exist for broadband innovation in the healthcare, education, transportation, energy, workforce development and government arenas.

BROADBAND AND HEALTH CARE

Improving healthcare outcomes among people of color is critical to the longevity of minority populations, but is also critical to supporting the well being and productivity of America's ever-changing workforce. Generally, African Americans experience higher rates of treatable, preventable illnesses than any other racial group in the United States. Consequently, the roughly $30 billion provided by the ARRA to develop health information technology ("IT") and telemedicine programs across the country could substantially reverse many of the detrimental healthcare outcomes faced by communities of color.

For example, a randomized clinical trial conducted in 2007 compared home healthcare management options for African Americans with chronic heart failure. At issue were the benefits of nurse home care versus nurse telemanagement.[17] The study showed that the patients receiving nurse telemanagement displayed statistically significantly higher rates of self-efficacy, satisfaction and quality of life, with substantial reductions in patient stress, re-hospitalization and the need for medical interventions than did the patients treated with in-person nurse home visits.[18] In another study that focused on the impact of telemedicine in treating diabetic glycoma, the patients receiving treatment through broadband-enabled telemedicine experienced better results than the patients who received traditional doctor's care (i.e. the results yielded improved glycemic control, blood pressure levels, and total and LDL-cholesterol levels for those patients who received treatment via broadband-enabled telemedicine).[19]

Telemedicine programs allow patients in underserved communities to receive medical services via videoconferencing,[20] have remote access doctors in distant urban medical centers,[21] reduce health care costs by reducing travel time for doctors,[22] increasing access to specialists,[23] improving early detection,[24] and reducing the need for physicians where no physician is necessary.[25] Further, broadband telemedicine programs have decreased hospitalizations for chronic illnesses by 40% in the case of emergency room visits and 63% for hospitalizations overall.[26] Not only can an integrated use of telemedine and health IT improve our wellbeing, these technologies

17 Bondmass, Mary D., Improving Outcomes for African Americans with Chronic Hearth Failure: A Comparison of Two Home Care Management Delivery Methods, Home Healthcare Management & Practice, Vol. 20, No. 1, 8-20 (2007).
18 Id.
19 Shea, Steven, The Informatics for Diabetes and Education Telemedicine (IDEATEL) Project, Transactions of the American Clinical and Climatological Association, Vol. 118 (2007).
20 See id.
21 See id. (citing Andrew Pollack, "Who's Reading Your X-Ray?" New York Times (Nov. 16, 2003).
22 See id. (citing American Telemedicine Association, Telemedicine Cost Efficiency, http://www.atmeda.org/news/mediaguide/costefficiency.htm) (last visited June 16, 2009).
23 See id. (citing California Broadband Task Force, The State of Connectivity: Building Innovation through Broadband, at p. 15 (Jan. 2008), available at http://www.calink.ca.gov/pdf/CBTF_FINAL_Report.pdf (last visited June 26, 2009)).
24 See id. (citing Stacie Huie, Facilitating Telemedicine: Reconciling National Access with State Licensing Laws, 18 Hastings Comm. & Ent. L.J. 377, 389 (1996)).
25 See id. (citing Sarah Born, Telemedicine in Massachusetts: A Better Way to Regulate, 42 New Eng. L. Rev. 195, 202 (2007)).
26 See id. (citing Marlis Meyer, Rita Kobb & Patricia Ryan, Virtually Healthy: Chronic Disease Management in the Home, at p. 1, Disease Management Vol. 5, No. 2 (June 2002), available at www1.va.gov/visn8/v8/clinical/cccs/articles/virtually.doc (last visited June 26, 2009)).

likewise afford healthcare savings unrivaled by any other efforts to contain costs.[27] The inclusion of telemedicine and health IT into our regular health management strategies should become an essential component of readying our citizens to fully participate in the 21st century economy.

POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS:

- Health care management systems can be improved through the use of IT and telemedicine systems, reducing health care costs by enabling physicians in urban centers to examine x-rays and provide immediate health care to rural patients from thousands of miles away, while facilitating electronic transmission of patient records and other vital data.[28]
- Government should identify and break down policy barriers to the effective use of health IT and broadband in delivering quality health care, including outdated restrictions on reimbursement for services and eHealth monitoring services for Medicare/ Medicaid patients.

BROADBAND AND EDUCATION

The achievement gap between African Americans and other racial groups, particularly their white peers, has persisted over the years. Even though achievement has improved across the board, African Americans tend to lag behind, especially in math and the sciences. The new American economy requires workers who are highly educated and well versed in the power of technology, not only for the performance of IT jobs, but also for the enhanced performance of other job functions made more efficient by an increasing reliance on advanced communication technologies.

To improve academic performance and educational achievement, the ARRA has dedicated $650 million to educational technology, $3 billion to school improvements and another $200 million to teacher incentives. If leveraged properly, these resources can be used to create new broadband-enabled online education opportunities that will enable users to learn more and achieve to the highest levels of their capabilities.

These new digital learning technologies have the capacity to increase access to educational resources, which would not otherwise be available to many low-income and minority communities.[29] Broadband has the potential to change the classroom experience by helping students overcome geographical and financial barriers that would otherwise limit their exposure, repress their imaginations and diminish their prospects of optimal achievement. New distance-learning opportunities connect teachers with students anywhere in the world for Web-based instruction and video conferencing,[30] and learning does not have to stop when the school closes, but can endure as a continuing pursuit of improvement and understanding in school and after school. Moreover, broadband can help us

27 Current estimates put U.S. healthcare spending at approximately 15% of GDP, the world's highest. Through telemedicine, broadband has the potential to deliver huge cost savings to America's health care system – over $300 billion annually -- while also delivering much needed specialty care to rural parts of the country.

28 Such care is currently authorized through the Rural Health Care Program, authorized under Section 254(c) of the Communications Act, however the program is severely under funded. See initial Comments of the Broadband Diversity Supporters, In the Matter of A National Broadband Plan For Our Future, GN Docket 09-51, filed June 8, 2009 ("National Broadband Comments") at 16.

29 See Benton Action Plan (citing Meris Stansbury, "Panelists: Online Learning Help Minority Students," eSchool News (April 11, 2008) ("... minority students take online courses to enroll in more high-level and higher-quality courses, with superior teachers, than may be physically available to them), available at http://www.eschoolnews.com/news/top-news/index.cfm?i=53470 (last visited June 23, 2009); citing Karen Greenwood Henke, "How Fast is Enough?" Tech & Learning (October 15, 2007) ("[i]n Nebraska, an education IT manager reports, 'Our rural schools live and die by video distance learning. . . . It's the next best thing to a highly qualified teacher in a face-to-face environment.'"), available at http://www.techlearning.com/article/7946 (last visited June 23, 2009); citing Alliance for Public Technology, "Broadband Initiatives: Enhancing Lives and Transforming Communities," (November 2007) at 11, 27 (after students in a mixed-income housing project in Washington, D.C. were provided with internet access both at home and at school, they were able to enroll in an online IT training program that increased their post-graduation earning potential from $9,800 to $28,000), available at www.apt.org/publications/reports-studies/broadband_initiatives.pdf (last visited June 23, 2009).

30 Dan Logsdon, "Extending Internet Access to All: Government Policy Should Support Expansion of Broadband Service", Lexington Herald- Leader, 4/30/07.

reduce the costs of education by creating administrative efficiencies, facilitating ongoing teacher education, providing alternatives for students with special needs, and increasing parental involvement.[31]

To ensure that we are able to attain and provide the best educational opportunities possible for the people of this nation, we should encourage all citizens, young and old, to take part in distance learning and online education opportunities. We can promote the success of these programs by encouraging the adoption of individualized curricula designed to accommodate the varying ways in which people absorb and process information. Finally, we must ensure that all teachers are properly incentivized, adequately trained and proficient in the most modern uses of digital educational technology so that they can be better equipped to educate our nation's citizenry.

POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS:

- Online and distance learning programs should be capitalized for better training opportunities for teachers, and to use enhanced learning methods for students, like specialized instruction and personalized curricula.
- Media, telecom and broadband technology should be taught as the equivalent required earth and life sciences (e.g., biology, chemistry, physics) in middle and high school or introduced into elementary education.
- Government should support programs to ensure that parents with school-age children and/or those who are actively enrolled in continuing education receive free, high-speed Internet access in the home to support these pursuits. Industry support should be leveraged to help support a basic access product for this population.
- Government should focus on policy barriers, such as outdated curriculum restrictions, national and state standards that limit the ability of broadband to deliver quality educational resources and higher levels of digital proficiency.

BROADBAND AND EMPLOYMENT

The impact of the American recession on minority communities yields a telling example of the socio-economic face of minority communities during this time of transition towards our new economy.[32] In the wake of continued job loss in major sectors of American industry, the national unemployment rate rose to 9.7% during the month of August.[33] For African Americans, that percentage has peaked at about 15%, while for Hispanics unemployment has increased to 13% [34] With rising unemployment rates, minority communities are likewise being stripped of nearly $213 billion in assets because of home foreclosures.[35] If, through broadband use, we can train a new workforce that prepares members of minority communities to reduce joblessness by preparing them to become greater participants in our new economy, then we can facilitate efforts to improve economic self-sufficiency within communities.

31 See Benton Action Plan (citing Ed Tech Action Network, Why Technology in Schools? www.edtechactionnetwork.org/technology_schools.html).

32 Berndt, Julia, James, Cara, The Effects of the Economic Recession on Communities of Color, The Henry J. Kaiser Family Foundation, Race, Ethnicity & Healthcare Issue Brief, (July 2009) available at http://www.kff.org/minorityhealth/upload/7953.pdf last visited Sept. 20, 2009.

33 U.S Bureau of Labor Statistics, Economic News Release: Employment Situation Summary – August 2009 (Sept. 4. 2009) available at http://www.bls.gov/news.release/empsit.nr0.htm last visited Sept. 20, 2009.

34 Id.

35 Fernandez, Valeria, Everyone's Feeling Economic Pan, But It's Hitting Minorities Worst of All, ColorLines (Jan. 19, 2009) available at http://www.alternet.org/workplace/120755/everyone's_feeling_economic_pain,_but_it's_hitting_minorities_worst_of_all/ last visited September 20, 2009.

In an economy increasingly fueled by digital awareness and innovation, it is imperative that broadband adoption and computer literacy become high priorities for all citizens, particularly among the nation's minority populations. Online economic development training and education would be especially beneficial to African Americans, who would be able to explore a vast array of career educational and training opportunities or find resources for entrepreneurial assistance beyond what is normally available within the confines of their geographic communities.

A 2006 report prepared for the U.S. Department of Commerce states that "broadband access does enhance economic growth and performance," but that "broadband had to be used, not just available."[36] Therefore, to reap maximum benefits, America's workforce must have the ability to perform rudimentary and as well as advanced computing functions. Our goal should be to create more life-long learning opportunities for African Americans and other minorities and to increase technological training instruction, and worker training resources in order to create the best educated workforce possible. To achieve this, we must properly support and utilize HBCUs, community colleges and other learning institutions that focus on the education of African Americans and other minorities.

POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS:

- Digital literacy should become a fundamental component of worker training and retraining initiatives. Governments at all levels should include training on computer and Internet use in their workforce development plans.
- Community colleges, HBCUs and community-based organizations should be recognized and resourced to serve as vocational training centers that support workforce development efforts for non-skilled, de-skilled and dislocated workers; and, these institutions should also be more aligned with youth employment initiatives at the federal, state and city level to encourage advancement into IT and telecommunications careers.

36 Ford, George S., PhD, Koutsky, Thomas M., Esq., Spiwak, Lawrence J., Esq., "Phoenix Center Policy Paper Number 31: The Demographic and Economic Drivers of Broadband Adoption in the United States." PHOENIX CENTER POLICY PAPER SERIES (Nov. 2007) (citing S.E. Gillett, W.H. Lehr & M. Sirbu, Measuring Broadband's Economic Impact, Final Report (Feb. 28, 2006) http://www.eda.gov/ImageCache/EDAPublic/documents/pdfdocs2006/mitcmubbimpactreport_2epdf/v1/mitcmubbimpactreport.pdf) at 3; G. Ford & T. Koutsky," Broadband and Economic Development: A Municipal Case Study from Florida," 17 REVIEW OF URBAN & REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT STUDIES 216 (2005).

THE NATIONAL CALL TO ACTION FROM AFRICAN AMERICAN ELECTED OFFICIALS

Gaining access to broadband is crucial to the well being of all Americans and the future livelihood of minorities, especially African Americans. Due to economic and other barriers, African Americans are lagging behind on broadband adoption. As online information increasingly becomes an integral part of everyday life, this digital divide is likely to widen the profound gaps between whites and African Americans on wealth, health, and education, thus impairing the development of African American communities and eventually the nation as a whole.

As African American elected officials that represent all layers of government and millions of voters, we believe it is imperative to increase broadband adoption among African Americans and other people of color, and we offer the policy directions outlined in this paper as a starting point for achieving that goal.

We welcome dialogue with government, industry and other affected stakeholders to ensure that the policies that we put in place today will have the foresight to encourage and increase minority broadband adoption.

ABOUT THE ORGANIZATIONS ENDORSING THIS REPORT

The National Black Caucus of State Legislators (NBCSL) is a body of 624 African American state legislators whose primary mission is to develop, conduct and promote educational, research and training programs designed to enhance the effectiveness of its members, as they consider legislation and issues of public policy which impact, either directly or indirectly "the general welfare" of African American constituents within their respective jurisdictions.

The National Organization of Black Elected Legislative Women (NOBEL) is a non-profit; non-partisan organization primarily composed of current and former Black women legislators as well as many appointed officials. Originally established in 1985 as a national organization to increase and promote the presence of Black women in government, NOBEL in recent years has expanded its vision to serve as a global voice to address a myriad of issues affecting the lives of all women. NOBEL has created the African American Women Technology Caucus (AAWTC) to ensure that policy development related to advanced communications technologies and broadband deployment has a strong focus on women and African American communities.

The National Conference of Black Mayors (NCBM) represents more than 650 African American Mayors across the United States; collectively its membership represents over 48 million citizens. NCBM articulates public policy positions and serves as a clearinghouse on information pertinent to municipal development and financing. NCBM provides technical and management assistance through cutting-edge research, best practices and partnerships that enable its mayors to challenge and overcome grappling issues that erode the vitality and sustainability of our nation's cities.

The National Black Caucus of Local Elected Officials (NBC-LEO) was created in 1970 to represent the interests of African American elected officials. NBC-LEO's objectives include increasing African American participation on the National League of Cities' steering and policy committees to ensure that policy and program recommendations reflect African American concerns and benefit their communities. The organization also works independently with its members to inform them on issues affecting the African American community and helps to devise ways to achieve their community objectives through legislation and direct action.

The National Association of Black County Officials (NABCO), an association of approximately 1,200 elected Black County Officials representing 38 states and the District of Columbia and 570 counties, was founded in 1975 to provide elected and appointed black county officials with a forum to review, share and develop responses to local and national issues.

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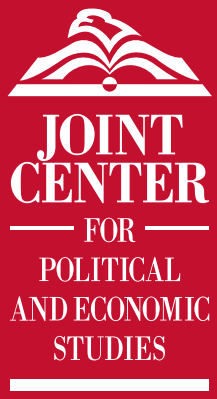

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